

What is claimed is:

1 1. A customer care center comprising:
2 a contact layer comprising a plurality of media-specific handlers
3 for managing contacts in a plurality of communications media with
4 customers of a business served by the customer care center, each
5 handler adapted to handle a specific one or more of the media, and
6 including connecting the contacts to resources for servicing, collecting and
7 reporting events including contact and resource status, and handling the
8 events and assigning the resources according to received directions;
9 a communications layer comprising software for managing
10 communications each comprising one or more contacts in one or more
11 media in a media-independent manner, including allocating resources
12 shared by a plurality of handlers and directing handling of events by the
13 contact layer according to business information, and tracking and
14 accumulating events reported by the contact layer; and
15 a business layer comprising software for managing business
16 services by supplying business information that defines the services to the
17 communications layer.

1 2. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the contact layer manages resources that are not shared by a
3 plurality of handlers.

1 3. The customer care center of claim 2 wherein:
2 each handler manages the unshared resources that are
3 allocated to that handler.

1 4. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the communications layer comprises no media-specific
3 equipment.

1 5. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the communications layer software further directs handling of
3 events according to the accumulated reported events.

1 6. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the communications layer software provides information on the
3 accumulated reported events to the business layer.

1 7. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the business layer software manages business services by
3 managing transactions each comprising one or more communications and
4 that provide the business services, by defining business rules and
5 applying them to the transactions to develop dialogs which it supplies to
6 the communications layer;
7 the communications layer software translates the supplied
8 dialogs into translations that it uses to control the contact layer and
9 translations that it supplies to the contact layer; and
10 the handlers of the contact layer use the translations supplied
11 thereto to manage the contacts.

1 8. The customer care center of claim 7 wherein:
2 the business layer software supplies to the communications
3 layer definitions of reports requested by the business and forms the
4 reports from data collected by the communications layer; and
5 the communications layer software translates the definitions of
6 the reports into database schema that accommodate data that the
7 communications layer must collect for those reports.

1 9. The customer care center of claim 7 wherein:
2 the business rules include resource scheduling rules, resource
3 behavior rules, service target rules, and customer treatment rules.

1 10. The customer care center of claim 7 wherein:
2 the business layer software further has access to customer
3 data which it applies to the transactions to develop the dialogs.

1 11. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the business layer software effects scheduling and adherence
3 tracking of resources by providing business information to the
4 communications layer and obtaining accumulated reported events from
5 the communications layer.

1 12. The customer care center of claim 1 wherein:
2 the business layer provides an interface for the business to the
3 customer care center for providing information to and obtaining
4 information from the customer care center.

1 13. A computer-readable medium containing instructions
2 which, when executed in a computer that is connected to a contact layer
3 of a customer care center comprising a plurality of media-specific handlers
4 for managing contacts in a plurality of communications media with
5 customers of a business served by the customer care center, each
6 handler adapted to handle a specific one or more of the media, and
7 including connecting the contacts to resources for servicing, collecting and
8 reporting events including contact and resource status, and handling the
9 events and assigning the resources according to received directions,
10 cause the computer to effect the functionality of the communications layer
11 and the business layer of any one of the claims 1 and 4-12.